

**NORMS IN NON-WESTERN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE
APPLICABILITY OF WESTERN NORMATIVE THEORY TO THE SCO AND ASEAN**

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Introduction

On December 3rd, 2015, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional organization whose members include Russia, China, and four Central Asian states comprising of nearly a quarter of the world's population, expressed a strong commitment to work closely with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an alliance among ten Southeast Asian states comprising of a population of about 630 million people.¹ The relationship between the SCO and ASEAN has been solidifying for years now. Back in 2004, the leaders of the SCO held a Summit in Tashkent, proposing to gradually set up a partnership network of multilateral associations.² There is a great potential for enhancing cooperation between the SCO and ASEAN, primarily due to the fact that both organizations hold similar positions on many issues.³ Why have these two organizations cited cooperation on the basis of enhancing peace and stability as their common aspiration? Why are these organizations important? The answer to these questions is embedded in normative theory.

I argue that in the case of the SCO, Town's theory of norms and social hierarchies, which essentially argues for the importance of social ranking, is most applicable in explaining the rejection of democratic norms and the promotion of authoritarian ones because of the success of major players, including Russia and China, in repressing the emergence and diffusion of democratic norms. In the case of ASEAN, I argue that Acharya's theory of localization, which argues for the importance of local contexts in norm diffusion, is most applicable in explaining why ASEAN has not only adopted Western human rights norms to a limited extent, but also why there is an "action-identity gap" in the sense that norms that have actually localized are non-interference and sovereignty norms constituting the 'ASEAN Way.' These organizations are important to consider because they are the future of multilateral cooperation in a non-Western setting, meaning that the norms they purport has the

¹ "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to Strengthen Ties with ASEAN." Accessed December 9, 2015.

<http://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-to-strengthen-ties-with-asean>.

² "SCO-ASEAN Cooperation for Mutual Interests." Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://en.sco-russia.ru/cooperation/20140905/1013179818.html>.

³ Ibid.

potential to heavily influence the behavior of their respective member states, observer states, and inferior states in the region. The topic I am researching is important because it considers non-Western international organizations in a new perspective, which focuses on testing theoretical claims in different organizational settings which have not yet been thoroughly analyzed up to this point due to the ideational difficulties of normative theory. This research speaks to highly theoretical debates among well-known scholars, including Ambrosio and Acharya, regarding the emergence and diffusion of norms.

Organizational behaviors require an explanation that is based on normative theory, because norms hegemonize state behavior and state organizational forms.⁴ Norms become important in the sense that they influence the behavior of IOs and the areas in which they find mutual interests and opt to cooperate with one another. The challenge is that there is no set dominant theory that explains norm emergence and norm diffusion. Therefore, the question central to my research is: which normative theories best explain why specific norm sets have emerged and diffused in the non-Western settings of the SCO and ASEAN? What can be drawn from the cases of the SCO and ASEAN is that the specific norms that have emerged and diffused in these organizations are influenced by many factors, and no single theory encompasses an explanation for their behaviors, which means that to understand their behavior, it is necessary to engage in debates of theoretical contestation regarding norms to determine which theory best applies in explaining certain norm sets. These organizations serve as a testing ground for comprehension of the mechanisms explaining why norm sets emerge and diffuse in non-Western settings. Up until now, the applicability of normative theory to non-Western IOs is scarce precisely because norms are difficult to measure, especially in shifting political environments like those of the SCO and ASEAN, which will be discussed in later sections of my research.

⁴ Towns, Ann E. "Norms and Social Hierarchies: Understanding International Policy Diffusion 'From Below.'" *International Organization* 66, no. 02 (April 2012): 179–209. doi:10.1017/S0020818312000045.

To answer the question of the mechanisms by which specific norms have emerged and diffused in the non-Western settings of the SCO and ASEAN I assess the strengths and weaknesses of three of the most prominent normative theories: Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of the norm life cycle, the theory of norms and social hierarchies proposed by Ann E. Towns, and the theory of norm localization proposed by Amitav Acharya. Evaluating to what extent these theories apply or do not apply to these IOs allows for a better approach to answering the question of why certain norms become defined and disseminated in the SCO and ASEAN. Norms, which are defined as standards of behavior for actors of a given identity, are assumed to hegemonize state behavior and state organizational forms.⁵ While scholars like Nicholas Khoo might label norms as "red-herrings," the international organizations that disseminate specific norms have the potential for shaping the international community because they determine which behaviors are appropriate and which aren't. Behavior influences cooperation, especially in a multilateral framework. Norms are important, especially in an international context, because of their potential to shape behavior at the international level, the state level, and even the local level.

In the first section of this research I present the main theoretical contentions of each of the arguments that I use later on for analysis, starting with Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of the norm life cycle, followed by Towns' theory on norms and social hierarchies and Acharya's theory of norm localization. After briefly discussing these theoretical contentions, I lay out each theory and apply each theory by tailoring it to the SCO and ASEAN so as to determine how applicable the theory is. In the case of the SCO, I specifically address democratic norms versus authoritarian norms, and in the case of ASEAN I specifically address the normative tradition known as the 'ASEAN way' versus Western human rights norms. In essence, I test each individual theory using specific norm sets for each of the international organizations. After tailoring each of these theories to the SCO and ASEAN,

⁵ Towns, Ann E. "Norms and Social Hierarchies: Understanding International Policy Diffusion 'From Below.'" *International Organization* 66, no. 02 (April 2012): 179–209. doi:10.1017/S0020818312000045.

I determine which theoretical contention is most applicable to the norm sets used for analysis, and conclude by discussing the theoretical implications of my arguments, as well as propositions for future research and a re-iteration of the significance of this topic. Western ideas embedded in the broader liberal framework have not been socialized into Central Asia and Southeast Asia. Unilateral socialization of Western norms of democracy and human rights has been outmaneuvered by a complex system of mutual interactions which can be best addressed via theoretical contestation on norms.⁶ This research highlights the fact that non-Western international organizations merit more than broad theoretical claims precisely because a complex system of mutual interactions requires analysis of the way norms operate at different levels: international, national, and local ones. For a normative theoretical claim to be strengthened, it must consider how it applies to different actors in different settings, including non-Western ones.

Literature Review: Theories of Norm Emergence and Norm Diffusion

Current scholarly research offers many explanations for what factors influence the creation and diffusion of norms. Three of the most prominent theories on norms are: the concept of the norm cycle proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink, the theory of norms and social hierarchies proposed by Anne Towns, and the theory of norm localization proposed by Amitav Acharya.

Norm life cycle: Finnemore & Sikkink

Finnemore and Sikkink make three arguments related to international norm dynamics and political change. They define norms as standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity.⁷ Finnemore and Sikkink generate some propositions about three aspects of norms: the origins, mechanisms by which they exercise influence, and the conditions under which norms will be

⁶ Lewis, David. "Who's Socialising Whom? Regional Organisations and Contested Norms in Central Asia." *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 7 (September 1, 2012): 1219–37. doi:10.1080/09668136.2012.701391.

⁷ Ibid.

influential in world politics.⁸ Of the three arguments they make, the most relevant argument for the purposes of this analysis is the following: norms evolve in a patterned life cycle, and different behavioral logics dominate different segments of the life cycle.⁹ Change at each stage of the process is characterized by different actors, motives, and mechanisms of influence (see figure 1 of Appendix). These specific actors are individuals, and as will be shown in the analysis, specifically state leaders. The three stages are: norm emergence, norm cascade, and internalization. Norm emergence is defined as persuasion by norm entrepreneurs, which are state leaders and influential individuals who use organizational platforms to promote certain norms.¹⁰ Norm cascade is defined as the dynamic of imitation, and internalization as norms acquiring a taken-for-granted quality.¹¹ Finnemore and Sikkink's theory will best help inform the stage at which norms emerge within these international organizations, and which actors act as norm entrepreneurs in promoting different norm sets. As will be shown in this analysis, if we consider states entities, then we cannot conglomerate these IOs as ones purporting a specific norm without considering the influence of states and the individuals leading them. Towns, makes the argument for consideration of the link between norms and social hierarchies, which I posit is crucial to gaining a better understanding of the ways in which norm emergence, social ranking, and power structures go hand in hand.

Norms and social hierarchies: Ann E. Towns

A second perspective, which addresses norm diffusion, is Towns' theory of norms and social hierarchies, which attempts to view the operation of norms in international policy diffusion in a different manner. She defines norms as standards of behavior for actors of a given identity.¹² Towns argues that norms do not simply standardize behaviors, as it is conventionally argued, but that they

⁸ Ibid., 888.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 895.

¹² Towns, Ann E. "Norms and Social Hierarchies," 179.

also draw on and set up social hierarchical orders among states. The social hierarchy here concerns the ordering of actors as superior or inferior to one another in socially important respects.¹³ The conceptual link between norms and social ranking proposed by Towns is the idea that norms help set the terms for what can be said and done as a certain kind of actor and what has to be said and done in order to be regarded as a certain kind of actor.¹⁴ In other words, the link between norms and social hierarchies is manifested in how new policies are legitimated and framed by advocates.¹⁵ Norms function to validate certain kinds of behaviors for specific sorts of actors and devalue other sorts of behavior. Towns uses the example of the diffusion of legal sex quotas to argue that new policy measures may emerge from below, as peripheral states attempt to improve their standing.¹⁶ Even though Towns' theory touches the surface of identity, it does not go in-depth in discussing local context in the way that Acharya does, nor does it consider the specific mannerisms by which a norm isn't rejected or accepted in entirety, and is instead selectively tailored, with certain elements infused into local norms and other eliminated, a weakness which will be further explained in my analysis. What's most important about Town's argument is her main theoretical claim: norms draw on and generate social hierarchies in the sense that a state's social rank determines which norms it can promote, and specific norms also determine how a state is ranked because these norms are the determinants for what constitutes appropriate behavior for specific kinds of actors. It is this main theoretical claim that serves as my own point of analysis when approaching how applicable Towns' contentions are to the SCO and to ASEAN.

Norm localization: Amitav Acharya

Acharya proposes a theory of norm localization to explain the variation in two sets of proposals ASEAN faced in the 1990s to redefine its agenda and reshape its institutional machinery.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

Acharya argues that the variation in outcome of the two proposals is explained by localization. Looking beyond “static” theories of norm diffusion that remain confined to the domestic arena, Acharya posits the idea that localization, not wholesale acceptance or rejection, settles most cases of normative contestation, and that local beliefs themselves are a part of a legitimate normative order.¹⁷ Localization describes “a complex process and outcome by which norm-takers build congruence between transnational norms (including norms previously institutionalized in a region) and local beliefs and practices.”¹⁸ It is a process by which foreign norms are incorporated into local norms.¹⁹ What’s most important about this theoretical claim is the idea that the success of norm diffusion depends on the extent to which they provide opportunities for localization.²⁰ Localization is differentiated from other theories of norm diffusion in that it is also a process in which the role of local actors is more crucial than that of outside actors.²¹ Instead of treating framing, in which norm advocates “create” issues by using language that names and interprets them and grafting, in which norm entrepreneurs associate a new norm with a preexisting one in efforts to institutionalize the norm, as well as other adaptive processes as distinct and unrelated phenomena, Acharya uses localization to “bring them together under a single conceptual framework and stresses the agency role of local actors in performing them.”²² Though Acharya’s theory is challenged by the fact that in some cases localization has not yet occurred or has been impeded by external actors, Acharya’s theory will be most helpful in understanding the role that a local context plays in norm diffusion of specific norm sets within the member states of each of these international organizations, as well as in explaining how the adaptation of specific norms to local contexts has aided in the diffusion of said norms.

¹⁷Acharya, Amitav. “How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism.” *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (2004): 239–75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 244.

Logical extrapolations

What do these theories tell us? For one, that there is not set dominant theory on which factors best explain norm emergence and norm diffusion. Though no single theory is predominant over the others, this does not mean that certain theories aren't more applicable when it comes to specific cases. Essentially, from current scholarly research we know the following: there is a specific process by which norms can come to be defined and by which they can emerge, there are certain actors that play a significant role in the emergence and possible success of these norms, and the actors that play this significant role exist in a social hierarchical order, which may influence which norms emerge in the first place. The success of norm diffusion itself may also be determined by the way that the norm adapts to local norms.

If Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of the norm cycle is right, then we would expect to see the stages playing out in different norm sets. We would be able to determine who the norm entrepreneurs are or were in certain norm sets, their influence on norm emergence, and why these entrepreneurs pushed for specific norm sets. If Towns' theory of norms and social hierarchies is more applicable, then we would be able to see cases of norm diffusion being more influenced by social hierarchies and rankings of states. If Acharya's theory of norm localization is right, then we would expect to see norm diffusion driven primarily by the adaptation of these norms to local ones, seeing the local factor as a driver for eventual success or failure of diffusion. The determinant in the cases of the SCO and ASEAN and their specific norms sets will be the level at which we see the most influence on the outcomes of these norms. There are many drivers that determine the outcome of which norms survive and which do not, such as specific state leaders, external actors including powerful states promoting norms within inferior ones, and local actors adapting foreign norms into local ones. Each one of these theories argues for which one of these drivers has the most influence on the outcome of norm sets. In

this analysis, the most applicable theory will be the theory that argues for the “driver” which exhibits the most influence on the rise of specific norm sets within these organizations.

Methodology and Case Selection

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or the SCO, is a regional international organization whose members include Russia, China, and the four Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with India, Pakistan, Iran, Mongolia, and Afghanistan holding observer status.²³ SCO member states have a population of about 1.5 billion people, which is nearly a quarter of the total world population.²⁴ Aside from the sheer magnitude of its population, its importance is embedded in the question of whether or not it is a fundamental challenge to Western norms. The existence of two dominant powers in the SCO ensures “that the norms promoted by Moscow and Beijing will have a disproportionate influence on Central Asia.”²⁵ It might be that because the SCO encompasses such powerful states, it will be the organization that changes expectations of appropriate behavior, which have so far been heavily influenced by Western norms.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was formed in 1967 amidst the Vietnam War.²⁶ It is an alliance promoting economic and political cooperation by “fostering dialogue among its ten members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.”²⁷ ASEAN comprises a population of about 630 million, and is projected to rank as the fourth largest economy by 2050.²⁸ ASEAN exhibits its importance via its role as a leader of East Asian trade, economic, and security integration. Acharya states that two decades

²³ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’: How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 8 (October 1, 2008): 1321–44. doi:10.1080/09668130802292143

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 1341.

²⁶ Bennett, Isabella, Julie Ginsberg, and Beina Xu. “ASEAN: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed December 4, 2015. <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/asean-association-southeast-asian-nations/p18616>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kurlantzick, Joshua. “ASEAN’s Future and Asian Integration.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/aseans-future-asian-integration/p29247>.

ago, it was common for Southeast Asia to be portrayed as a construct of Western academia, but with its vision of a regional multipolar balance, ASEAN has shown that it is a strategic organization that has displayed the ability to maintain a power balance among Southeast Asian states permitting it the “greatest latitude of action.”²⁹

I chose the SCO and ASEAN for two primary reasons: 1) the SCO and ASEAN are non-Western IOs for which there is plenty of scholarly research available, helping to avoid research that is merely based on predictive theories rather than facts, and 2) precisely because the discussion on specific norm sets is very open-ended when it comes to the SCO and ASEAN, this leaves the opportunity to apply different theories and analyzing outcomes in attempts to answer the open-ended question, engaging the debates in a conversation about these specific IOs. These two international organizations also provide for analysis encompassing different power structures: the SCO includes rising powers like China as member states, while ASEAN includes states that have been historically marked by foreign interference.

For the purposes of this analysis, I draw upon three of the most prominent theoretical arguments for application to each international organization. In terms of gathering information on SCO norms and ASEAN norms, I have elected to draw upon some of the most well-known scholars, including Amitav Acharya and Thomas Ambrosio. The scholarly research being used for this analysis comes from contesting arguments, which allows for a conclusion that acknowledges opposing and often completely different ideas. There are many explanations regarding norm sets, but the norms I have selected, which include democratic norms, authoritarian norms, non-interference, and sovereignty norms, are the ones that are most debated. This is of course, is an inherent difficulty in conducting research on this topic. The theories of norms I am using for this analysis are completely different, yet draw upon each other for exploration of the topic. Nonetheless, I’ve dealt

²⁹ Myers, David-Paul. *Regional Hegemons : Threat Perception and Strategic Response*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.

the differential factor and the fact that these topics are highly contested and theoretical by creating a conversation between the scholarly research and acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of each theory as they apply to the specific norms I've chosen to analyze. Since the theories on these norms are highly contested, this also makes for a stronger analysis.

Individual Theory Application to the SCO and ASEAN

Theory of Norm Cycles: Finnemore and Sikkink

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Many scholars argue that the SCO, which “promotes regime stability, the principle of non-interference, and the sanctity of state borders, and valorizes these principles above all others,” is the embodiment of a new set of values and norms governing the future.³⁰ Some of the norms which we see being highly debated in current scholarly research are authoritarian norms. According to Thomas Ambrosio, the content of these values and norms sets the contours of what is appropriate and legitimate within the region, and since the SCO appears to be operating in opposition to the principles of democratization and human rights, it is less likely that we will see meaningful political change in Central Asia in the foreseeable future.”³¹ He argues that the SCO seeks to undermine democratization in Central Asia, as autocratic leaders become bolder in their rejection of democratic norms.³² Considering the authoritarian norm under the lens of Finnemore and Sikkink’s theory of norm cycles, we see traces of the cycle via the SCO’s promotion of regime survival over democratization.³³

The first stage of the norm life cycle is norm emergence, in which we see persuasion by norm entrepreneurs as they attempt to convince a critical mass of states, or norm leaders to embrace new

³⁰ Lewis, David. “Who’s Socialising Whom?”

³¹ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’,” 1321.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 1326.

norms. The SCO “embodies important normative frameworks and uses its discursive power to legitimize certain norms and undermine or delegitimize others.”³⁴ Thus, the SCO acts as a norm entrepreneur, “engaged in the active promotion and contestation of norms related to peace, conflict and security, and framing issues in particular ways by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them.”³⁵ To further understand this argument of the SCO acting as a norm entrepreneur, Ambrosio points to various SCO documents: “A careful reading of the 2001 Declaration establishing the SCO and its 2002 Charter yields interesting insights into the norms and values of the organization...unlike the charters of the EU, the Organization for American States, and the AU, there is no commitment to democratic values in the SCO Charter and its founding documents are almost devoid of any mention of democracy.”³⁶ Instead, the SCO’s charter mentions respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the members figure prominently. Ambrosio also goes on to argue that the absence of democracy as a regional norm is compounded by the SCO’s emphasis on diversity. Though the term itself does not appear in either the Declaration or the Charter, it can be found in other important SCO documents, in relation to the right of all countries to choose their own way of development.³⁷ For example, the 2003 Moscow Declaration devotes an entire section to the issue of diversity, stating “different cultures should progress together, borrowing the best each of them has to offer, and strive for the common while leaving their differences aside.”³⁸

References to diversity, respect for other civilizations, and divergent socio-political development, when taken together with the prohibition against interference in internal affairs, and an absence of any commitment to democracy, further reinforce a sense of the absolute pre-eminence of

³⁴ Lewis, David. “Who’s Socialising Whom?,” 1225.

³⁵ Ibid., 1226.

³⁶ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’,” 1327.

³⁷ Ibid., 1329.

³⁸ “Moscow Declaration of Heads of Member States of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, President of Russia.” Accessed December 2, 2015. <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/1672>.

states to regulate their domestic politics.”³⁹ In addition to diversity norms, the SCO has also managed to place a strong emphasis on regional stability, which appears five times in the Declaration and three times in the Charter, with the mission of preserving “peace, security, and stability.”⁴⁰ Broadly, Ambrosio refers to the term stability as an association with constancy and the absence of change. Placing the SCO in context with its other principles, Ambrosio points to a lean towards the political status quo, and to a limit on regime change.⁴¹ Framing Ambrosio’s discussion of these norms to the norm life cycle, we can determine that the norm of diversity, along with its “corollaries of non-interference and separate but equal paths of development,” has allowed the SCO to reinforce the legitimacy of the autocratic regimes of Central Asia.⁴² Finnemore and Sikkink state that norms do not appear out of thin air: they are built by agents having strong notions about appropriate behavior in their community.⁴³ Indeed, stability and resistance to changes in the status quo on behalf of the SCO member states and heads of government follow this idea of strong notions. These specific norms have been taken up because they purposefully emphasize regime survival over the promotion of liberal democratic norms.⁴⁴ The doctrine of non-interference has helped shield its members from outside pressures toward democratization and maintain a focus on the pre-eminence of states to regulate their domestic politics.⁴⁵ This resistance stems from constant democracy promotion by Western states and IOs, which have set the stage for the SCO to challenge the ideas of universal democracy to provide a counterweight to external democratic norms.⁴⁶ The organization’s promotion of norms of diversity allow for it to act as a norm entrepreneur for authoritarian norms, because the emphasis on maintaining order over political change allows for little room for democracy promotion.

³⁹ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’,” 1329.

⁴⁰ “Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.” *The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation*. Accessed December 13, 2015. <http://www.sectSCO.org/EN123/show.asp?id=69>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1339.

⁴³ Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 896.

⁴⁴ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’,” 1324.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1525.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1341.

Hence, “the SCO has clearly sought to contribute to a normative framework which supports the political status quo and thus the maintenance of authoritarian regimes in the region.”⁴⁷ As Cooley explains, appeals to diversity and the principle of non-interference form a class of emerging counternorms.⁴⁸ Ergo, we see that Finnemore and Sikkink’s conceptualization of the norm life cycle is generally applicable to authoritarian norms in the SCO.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations

One of the most important norm sets defining ASEAN is the ‘ASEAN Way,’ a set of diplomatic norms which encourages the Southeast Asian countries to seek “an informal and incremental approach to cooperation through lengthy consultation and dialogue.”⁴⁹ Its elements include non-interference and sovereignty norms, which are elements that are also stipulated in the UN Charter.⁵⁰ This norm set is exemplified by The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, originally signed in 1976, which has been a touchstone document of the ASEAN and serves to reflect the core principles of ASEAN.⁵¹ Article 11 of the TAC explicitly states:

The High Contracting Parties shall endeavor to strengthen their respective national resilience in their political, economic, socio-cultural as well as security fields in conformity with their respective ideals and aspirations, free from external interference as well as internal subversive activities in order to preserve their respective national identities (ASEAN 1976).

Article 11 embodies the emergence of this specific norm set, which has been spurred by particular factors in the Southeast Asian region: “the ASEAN countries’ particular concerns over state sovereignty and their policy priorities in maintaining their domestic stability.”⁵² Finnemore and

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cooley, Alexander. “Countering Democratic Norms.” *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 3 (2015): 49–63. doi:10.1353/jod.2015.0049.

⁴⁹ Katsumata, Hiro. “Reconstruction of Diplomatic Norms in Southeast Asia: The Case for Strict Adherence to the ‘ASEAN Way.’” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 25, no. 1 (2003): 104–21.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Dunn, Lauren, Peter Nyers, and Richard Stubbs. “Western Interventionism versus East Asian Non-Interference: Competing ‘Global’ Norms in the Asian Century.” *The Pacific Review* 23, no. 3 (July 6, 2010): 295–312. doi:10.1080/09512748.2010.481049.

⁵² Katsumata, Hiro. “Reconstruction of Diplomatic Norms in Southeast Asia, 105.

Sikkink's theory of norm cycles is supported in the sense that most of the ASEAN member states have promoted this very specific norm as a result of common motivations.

Finnemore and Sikkink state that these during the stage of norm emergence, norm entrepreneurs build norms because they have strong notions about desirable behavior in their community, and also because they are able to call attention to issues using language that names and interprets them.⁵³ These norm entrepreneurs use organizational platforms to promote their norms, which contributes to the possibility of a norm cascade by clarifying what constitutes a violation of the norm, and also contributes to the possibility of the support from critical states, which are "critical if the substantive norm is compromised when the state is not on board."⁵⁴ Being that the heads of government of member countries are the highest authority in ASEAN, I argue that they are the norm entrepreneurs that help promote the norms within ASEAN.⁵⁵ These norm entrepreneurs have pushed forth the non-interference and sovereignty norms using ASEAN as their organizational platform because they recognize the long history of colonialism and foreign domination that has been experience by many states within Southeast Asia, a legacy which has left many governments, and subsequently heads of government who function as norm entrepreneurs, "with a strong distaste for coercive external influences that fail to understand for what in the best interests of the country of question and its population."⁵⁶ These norm entrepreneurs have strong notions against interference, and therefore promote the norm set that now constitutes the ASEAN Way.

The point of contention with Finnemore and Sikkink's theory is the role of critical states. Though they state that norm entrepreneurs do seek to influence critical states so they can garner support for the norm they promote, they do not consider that critical states have influenced the norms that these states have promoted in the first place. While I emphasize the role that a history of foreign

⁵³ Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change, 896.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 900-901.

⁵⁵ ASEAN Secretariat. *ASEAN: An Overview*. 3rd rev. ed. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 1991, 9.

⁵⁶ Dunn et al. "Western Interventionism versus East Asian Non-Interference," 297.

influence and interference have played in the promotion of non-interference norms, there is also another side to the rise of the ASEAN Way, which is the role of social hierarchies have played in determining which norms are promoted. Critical states like China and even the United States have greatly impacted norm sets within ASEAN, which is the point at which Town's theory of social hierarchies is able to assess the magnitude of this impact.

Finnemore and Sikkink's theory inform us of the existence of norm entrepreneurs in promoting diversity norms and subsequently authoritarian norms in the SCO and sovereignty and non-interference norms in ASEAN. Within these organizations, we see that individual state leaders collectively influence the norms within their respective organizations. Both the SCO and ASEAN feature a similar rejection of external political influence. This is important to note because these organizations seem to be modeling their norms sets on one another. Why the norm sets of these international organizations are very similar is explained by Towns.

Theory of Norms and Social Hierarchies: Ann E. Towns

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Considering Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of the norm life cycle and how the SCO has promoted authoritarian norms has not left much room for consideration of the influence of states. The challenge with applying the norm life cycle is that international organizations cannot be seen as norm entrepreneurs if it means that the factor of rank will be neglected. This is the issue created in applying Finnemore and Sikkink's theory of the norm life cycle: though they acknowledge the fact that organizations are platforms for norm promoters to promote their norms, and even the idea that norm promoters "work from standing international organizations that have purposes and agendas other than simply promoting one specific norm," they do not address the notion of power, even in discussing the second stage of the cycle, which is the norm cascade, in which more countries begin to adopt new norms more rapidly.

Towns' main contention is that international norms necessarily both generate and draw on social rank—norms help set the terms for what can be said and done as a kind of actor.⁵⁷ It is a social hierarchy that helps us understand from where new state policies emerge and spread. In this sense, applying the concept of rank to the repression of democratic norms and the promotion of authoritarian ones, we then hold greater regard for the role of individual states, especially Russia's and China's role as critical states in this particular case. Neither state is a democracy, nor does either state appear willing to allow for a democratic opening. Both states have demonstrated support for authoritarianism in key allies.⁵⁸ Therefore, the interests of major regional powers, as well as the other SCO members themselves "are fostering regional norms and values which maintain the autocratic status quo."⁵⁹ How does this relate to social hierarchy? It is social ranking that not only determines when "inferior" states adopt certain norms, whether it be by force, persuasion, or imitation, but also when these same states do not adopt certain norms. SCO members seeking to promote democracy have met another, less expected, layer of resistance—the opposition of autocratic regimes, which happen to be the most powerful member states.⁶⁰

To exemplify this, we can look to SCO elections monitoring. Cooley states that Central Asian states have created organizations that mimic the form, but not the function, of democratic election monitors, and that since 2005, "both the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States and the SCO have sent election monitoring teams to the region; their observers have delivered glowing assessments of obviously flawed Central Asian elections."⁶¹ These new election monitors have "undermined Western-backed monitors and the substance of their work" in failing to even publish

⁵⁷ Towns, Ann E. "Norms and Social Hierarchies," 187.

⁵⁸ Ambrosio, Thomas. "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit'," 1326.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1321.

⁶¹ Cooley, Alexander. "The New Great Game in Central Asia." *Foreign Affairs*. Accessed December 11, 2015. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/central-asia/2012-08-07/new-great-game-central-asia>.

mission guides.⁶² Central Asia's political systems look increasingly alike and are moving towards a similar pattern of governance, a fact that is not a coincidence, but rather a reflection of the influence of major players. There are many other examples: the Kazakh presidential election in 2006, the Kazakh Majlis election in 2007, and the presidential election in Uzbekistan in 2007. In these cases, Russia prompted elections monitoring and conducted monitoring under the "aegis of SCO structures," while duly contesting the OSCE's terms of democratization, and managed to invariably give a "clean bill of health to the conduct of elections in illiberal CIS states and their conformity to democratic standards."⁶³ These instances show that Russia has also come to occupy a central position in "authoritarian resistance to democratization and to Western policies that encourage democratic tendencies."⁶⁴

What the example of SCO elections monitoring tells us is that it is precisely the autocratic leaders of these individual states that "become bolder in their rejection of Western democratic norms and are willing to work together to ensure regime survival," a term that Ambrosio deems the Shanghai spirit.⁶⁵ My argument is supported by the fact that the "levels of freedom and democracy amongst the SCO's members have either stayed the same or are declining."⁶⁶ Elections monitoring helps explain why it is that levels of democracy amongst the SCO's leaders are declining, and why Central Asian political systems are looking increasingly alike. Undoubtedly, Russia and China have influenced the suppression of democratic norms and the promotion of authoritarian ones.

Alexander Cooley states that counternorms are grounded in changing power balances, as the Post-Cold War era of US hegemony gives way to a multipolar world.⁶⁷ He states that "appeals to

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Allison, Roy. "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia." *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 185–202. doi:10.1080/02634930802355121.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ambrosio, Thomas. "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit'," 1321.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1329.

⁶⁷ Cooley, Alexander. "Countering Democratic Norms."

“civilizational diversity” and the principle of noninterference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states form another class of emerging counternorms.⁶⁸ The People’s Republic of China is the leading supporter of this manner of critiquing liberal democracy’s universalism as well the political conditionality that international institutions adopt to further universal democratic norms.”⁶⁹ This respect for diversity, as aforementioned, functions as a counternorm—but by which actor is it perpetuated? I seek to underscore the role that China plays in diffusing authoritarian norms to counter democratic ones, and how this role is a reflection of the power of social ranking in influencing norms.

Finnemore and Sikkink’s ideas are supported if we consider Russia and China as norm promoters, and the SCO as the platform by which they advocate for or repress certain norms. Why the norms that are supported or not supported by these individual states “make the cut,” however, is best explained by Towns and a consideration for social rank. The existence of two dominant powers in the SCO ensures that the norms promoted by leaders in Moscow and Beijing have a disproportionate influence on Central Asia.⁷⁰ To further this argument, we can also look to the role of China in SCO summits. As a part of its Good Neighbor Policy, China is making use of the SCO to accelerate regional integration with Central Asian states. PRC officials regularly attend SCO Summit meetings, because there is a consensus in China that in order for there to be stability in its region, it needs to be proactive in shaping its neighborhood.⁷¹ At the fifth SCO summit in July of 2000, the Dushanbe Declaration of the Heads of State demarcated further solidification of sovereignty and non-interference norms:

The Parties, firmly upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and also affirming the right of every State to choose its own path of political,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁷⁰ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit,’” 1341.

⁷¹ Chung, Chien Peng. “China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.” *Problems of Post-Communism* 53, no. 5 (October 1, 2006): 3–14. doi:10.2753/PPC1075-8216530501.

economic and social development in accordance with its actual conditions, are opposed to interference in the internal affairs of other States, including interference under the pretext of “humanitarian intervention” and “protection of human rights”, and support each other’s efforts to defend the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and social stability of the five States (Article 6).⁷²

This declaration defines the norms of the original Shanghai Five forum, and its content has been repeated in various forms at subsequent SCO summits.⁷³ What this example shows is that the SCO Summits have served as China’s tool for “shaping the neighborhood,” a process that has involved promotion of non-interference and sovereignty norms and a blatant rejection of democratic norms, cited in the Dushanbe Declaration as pretexts of “humanitarian intervention.” Towns’ theory is supported if we consider the role that states, as entities, and their respective leaders, play in determining which norms make the cut, and which ones never make it out to the surface. Such is the case with authoritarian norms and the repression of democratic norms within the SCO, especially when they are crafted to best reflect the interests of dominant powers like Russia and China. By constructing the Shanghai Spirit, China offers counternorms to democratic norms: “China is able to project its domestic principles of sovereignty, non-interference, economic interdependence, bilateral negotiations and consultation based on historical linkages, to the greater Central Asian region through the SCO.”⁷⁴ The question left at hand is: where does identity come in? Though social rank is certainly an influence, one aspect that has not been considered is the local one, which is the gap that Amitav Acharya’s theory of norm localization has taken a step in addressing.

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Towns’ theory of norms and social hierarchies is better able to assess the influence of social ranking in determining which norms are promoted within ASEAN in the first place. Some scholars

⁷²“Dushanbe Declaration of the Heads of State.” Accessed December 13, 2015. <http://en.sco-russia.ru/cooperation/20140905/1013179818.html>.

⁷³ Chung, Chien Peng. “China and the Institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” 9.

⁷⁴ Blakemore, Scott. “Chinese Regionalism: China’s Engagement with ASEAN and SCO.” *Culture Mandala: The Bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies* 11, no. 1 (October 1, 2014). <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm/vol11/iss1/4>.

state that China is known for *allowing* governments heads of ASEAN member states to have a driving role in the Southeast Asian region.⁷⁵ Would the ‘ASEAN Way’ be different if China chose to step in and take on a more involved role? I posit that it would not, because China is partially responsible for helping to construct and promote these norms sets. By promoting and constructing institutional norms present in the ASEAN Way, China can cooperate with multiple states and grow influence.⁷⁶ This means that China has influenced norm promotion within ASEAN, which is a very unique role because not many states could have such an influence on the norms sets of international organizations unless they are as powerful as China and hold a higher social ranking than the member states comprising ASEAN. The ‘ASEAN Way’ has served as a way for China to contest traditional norms of Western liberal interference by utilizing this non-interventionist mentality.⁷⁷ The ‘ASEAN Way’ itself allows smaller states in ASEAN to have a stronger voice with greater powers while still maintaining their own sovereignty.⁷⁸ In this context, this norm in itself is an embodiment of a social hierarchy and was partly created due to an acknowledgement of the inferior status of many of the ASEAN member state: “China cannot be ignored. It remains the subordinate system’s most powerful and influential country.”⁷⁹ China’s emergence as a dominant force in the region, and the prospect of “Southeast Asia becoming to her what the Caribbean is to America or Eastern Europe to the USSR was one aspect of ASEAN members’ collective apprehensions.

China is not the only critical state that influences ASEAN. The other important relationship I emphasize is that of ASEAN and the United States, which has also exerted a great influence on

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Myers, David-Paul. “*Regional Hegemons.*”

another norm set promoted by ASEAN, which consists of human rights norms. On November of 2012, ASEAN released its human rights declaration.⁸⁰ The declaration states:

REAFFIRMING our adherence to the purposes and principles of ASEAN as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, in particular the respect for and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance (ASEAN 2012).⁸¹

The reason why this declaration depicts the influence of the United States is because the causes of human rights and democracy are Western norms, which embody a retreat from the doctrine of non-interference, a non-Western norm.⁸² Such changes in ASEAN's rhetoric have even driven Beijing to label the ASEAN states (except Singapore) as "a clique of imperialist puppets."⁸³ Town states that norms help set the terms for what can be said and done to be regarded as a certain kind of actor.⁸⁴

The reason that ASEAN has declared its commitments to Western norms is because of its inferior status: "the ASEAN states seek US support as a counterweight to both Chinese and Soviet regional designs."⁸⁵ By stressing its "pro-Western" image, ASEAN gained for itself "international goodwill as well as political and economic support from the West."⁸⁶ Due to their lower rank, the ASEAN states might be declaring support for Western norms because they want maintain US support, especially if these states want to maintain the US as a counterweight to China and Russia. To further complicate the competing norms ASEAN is contending with, I also add Davies' idea that "norm entrepreneurs who have sought to socialize human rights standards have managed to insert new ideas into the regional framework but, to date at least, have not impacted on the identity of many ASEAN states

⁸⁰ Davies, Mathew. 2013. "ASEAN and Human Rights Norms: Constructivism, Rational Choice, and the Action-Identity Gap." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13 (2): 207–31. doi:10.1093/irap/lct002.

⁸¹ "ASEAN HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION." Accessed December 4, 2015. <http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communicues/item/asean-human-rights-declaration>.

⁸² Acharya, Amitav. "Southeast Asia's Democratic Moment." *Asian Survey* 39, no. 3 (1999): 418–32. doi:10.2307/3021206.

⁸³ Myers, David-Paul. "Regional Hegemons," 197.

⁸⁴ Towns, Ann E. "Norms and Social Hierarchies," 187.

⁸⁵ Myers, David-Paul. "Regional Hegemons," 209.

⁸⁶ Acharya, Amitav. "Quest for Identity," 128.

and thus of ASEAN itself.”⁸⁷ This means that in spite of the influences of the West, there is a vast difference between discourse and action in regards to human rights norms. Why is this the case? The weakness with Towns’ theory is that even though it explains the role that social ranking has played in influencing the norms that ASEAN has claimed to have committed to it does not address the limit of these external influences when it comes to member states actually applying those norms.

What Towns’ theory shows is that powerful actors undoubtedly have an influence on the emergence and diffusion within both the SCO and ASEAN. In fact, we see that China plays an incredible role in both of these organizations. The parallels we can draw here are the points in which we see the organizations diverge in terms of the extent of the role of powerful actors. While the SCO is heavily influenced by critical states like China and Russia, ASEAN has a more even distribution of power. It is heavily influenced by China, but also by the United States, and has managed to strategically use these two states to build multilateral interactions and to balance power in its region. In Acharya’s discussion of localization, we will see that the two organizations diverge precisely because Western norms have at least managed to infiltrate ASEAN on a surface level. The existence of two dominant powers in the SCO makes it very different from ASEAN, because the norms promoted by Moscow and Beijing will have a disproportionate influence on Central Asia, which is why Towns’ theory best applies to the SCO. In ASEAN, social hierarchies are more important when we see a Western power at play in influencing norm sets, an influence best explained by the lack of an extremely powerful actor to outright reject democratic norms.

Theory of Norm Localization: Amitav Acharya

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The third perspective on normative theory is the concept of norm localization discussed by Acharya. Acharya’s theory of norm localization is described “the active construction (through

⁸⁷ Davies, Mathew. 2013. “ASEAN and Human Rights Norms: Constructivism, Rational Choice, and the Action-Identity Gap.” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13 (2): 207–31. doi:10.1093/irap/lct002.

discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices.”⁸⁸ The significance of this theory is that it considers the local aspect that has been neglected thus far. The challenge with applying this theory to the SCO is that there is not much of a trace of norm localization when it comes to democratic norms versus authoritarian ones. A posteriori, it appears that democratic norms have faced a wholesale rejection. The SCO seeks to remove any linkage between democratization and improved security. Instead, it promotes separatism onto the security agenda as a fundamental, shared security threat.⁸⁹

Acharya states that localization may occur in a case of major security or an economic crisis, which can lead to norm borrowing by calling into question the existing rules of the game.⁹⁰ While the Colour Revolutions that developed in societies in the former Soviet Union exemplify major movements that protested against governments seen as corrupt and authoritarian, democratic norms have not been catalyzed in these societies. Though these revolutions advocated democracy, even “successful” revolutions have shown insignificant or no democratic progress, because they were unable to address the obstacles posed by powerful authoritarian regimes, which I discuss further in this section.⁹¹ Another catalyst Acharya brings forth is systemic change, such as shifts in the distribution of power or the great powers’ interests and interactions.⁹² While it is true that systemic change is commonplace, and that the distribution of power changes as well, the challenge with democratic norms and their success within the SCO is the fact that major players like Russia and China are still “on the rise.” What this means is that powers like China are being mapped on as major players very recently. It may be too soon for there to be a systemic change that would cause Russia,

⁸⁸ Acharya, Amitav. “How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter?” 245.

⁸⁹ Lewis, David. “Who’s Socialising Whom?” 1224.

⁹⁰ Acharya, Amitav. “How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter?” 247.

⁹¹ Kalandadze, Katya, and Mitchell A. Orenstein. “Electoral Protests and Democratization: Beyond the Color Revolutions.” *Comparative Political Studies*, March 3, 2009. doi:10.1177/0010414009332131.

⁹² Ibid.

China, and other SCO member states to reconsider adopting democratic norms or even elements of them. Acharya mentions that a third catalyst could be domestic political changes in the norm-takers, but even the Central Asian states within the SCO are unlikely to localize democratic norms. One of the features of the emerging SCO identity is linked to its opposition to the imposition of the US values of democracy, an imposition that all the SCO member states' governments "appear to resent at the moment."⁹³ The condition for domestic political change is not yet present, and is unlikely to be present anytime soon.

The strength of Acharya's theory is that he addresses the influence of great powers in some ways, and inherently their social rank, but it is that very same rank that may prevent the localization of democratic norms within the SCO for the time-being and that may also partly explain why the colour revolutions did not serve as catalysts for democratic norms. Authoritarian norms might fit within the pre-existing norms of local contexts of SCO member states, which support Acharya's idea of pre-existing norms defining emerging norms, but this leaves the question of the rejection of democratic norms to mere prediction. Acharya's theory is minimally applicable to the case of democratic norms and their lack of appeal to the SCO if the local contexts within the SCO member states are not yet prone or open to localization. It is for this reason that Towns' perspectives on norms and social hierarchy holds for the promotion of authoritarian norms and the repression of democratic ones. The rejection of democratic norms might be best explained by the power that states like Russia and China yield over the SCO member states and their influence in "shutting down" any norm threatening authoritarian norms. In the words of Dadabaev, the SCO member states face the prospect of jumping from "the Russian frying pan into the Chinese fire," deterring the diffusion of democratic norms in favor of authoritarian ones.⁹⁴

⁹³ Dadabaev, Timur. "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regional Identity Formation," 113.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

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External influences and social ranking determine which norms a state supports and even adds to its Charter, but this external influence only goes so far in explaining the gap between discourse and action. While Towns and Acharya are both right, when it comes to actual applicability, Acharya's theory holds. Matthew Davies argues that members of ASEAN states have used human rights for political ends, for the enhancement of ASEAN's legitimacy in the eyes of its critics, which is in accordance with Town's theory of social ranking.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the "action-identity" gap that Davies alludes to is explained by Acharya if we consider that human rights norms have been institutionalized within the ASEAN charter and on paper, yet "each member state displays a problematic relationship with human rights norms domestically."⁹⁶ Human rights norms exist in the regional framework, but at the local level, they are nonexistent. Acharya's argument for localization "was not simply that norms are important, but instead was the more theoretically sophisticated claim that norms exercised their importance because they were intimately linked with the creation and maintenance of specific national, and regional, identities."⁹⁷

ASEAN's Charter, in Article 14, called for the creation of an ASEAN Human Rights Body, a commitment that was fulfilled by the creation in 2009 of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AIHCR).⁹⁸ Still, even after the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration was released in 2012, Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Singapore have displayed serious shortcomings with regard to civil and political rights.⁹⁹ To provide a few examples: in 2011 Myanmar's pro-democratic parties were denied the right to assemble, Singapore was criticized for possessing laws that interfered with freedom of expression, and in 2009 Cambodia was criticized for sustained attacks on

⁹⁵ Davies, Mathew. 2013. "ASEAN and Human Rights Norms," 207.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

human rights defenders and for limiting the freedom of expression of political actors.¹⁰⁰ Freedom House investigations in 2012 revealed that on a scale where one represents full freedom and seven complete repression, Brunei and Cambodia were rated six, and Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam seven.¹⁰¹ These examples reveal the action-identity gap, in which states “rated as repressive with regard to political rights have just agreed to a regional human rights declaration.”¹⁰² Ad nauseam, this action-identity gap is explained by the failure of these member states to localize the norms they have claimed to commit to because it concedes the agency role of local actors. Localization is used when it does not fundamentally altering the actors’ existing social identity.¹⁰³ Localization of these Western norms has not yet occurred because the social identity of the ASEAN states may be heavily constituted by their resistance to intervention and their commitment to collective apprehensions. Another explanation might be that because the existing normative order and an external norm are in a mutually constitutive relationship in localization, it has not occurred because the existing normative order is shifting with the introduction of new norms and the contestation of Western norms in non-Western settings. Why these norms have failed to localize can be theorized in many different ways: the catalysts do not yet exist, or the power dynamic with ASEAN is much more complicated because it is influenced by Western and non-Western actors, among many others.

What Acharya’s theory shows is that local agency is a factor which cannot be ignored. Where the SCO and ASEAN converge is in the explanation behind why localization of democratic norms has failed: the influence of powers like China counterbalancing the influence of powers like the United States is very impactful. Where the SCO and ASEAN diverge is in the extent to which norm localization has or has not occurred. Within the SCO, even the Colour Revolutions have not been enough to catalyze sufficient or even surface level localization of democratic norms. In ASEAN, in

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 214-215.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Acharya, Amitav, “How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter?,” 248.

spite of the action-identity gap, democratic norms have at least been adopted on the surface level, which is more than what can be said for the SCO. Again, for Acharya we see that social ranking and localization are somewhat intertwined, which explains how ASEAN has been influenced by Western powers, but only to a limited extent. We see that the norms within these two organizations are not universal, because democratic ones have at least managed to survive in ASEAN, while being rejected in the SCO.

Conclusions

In this analysis, I demonstrate that Towns' theory of norms and social hierarchies is most applicable in explaining the emergence and diffusion of authoritarian norms in the SCO, while Acharya's localization theory is most applicable in explaining the emergence and diffusion of the 'ASEAN Way' as opposed to human rights norms in ASEAN. What I have shown with my research is that these theories explain some aspects of norm emergence and norm diffusion within these IOs, but in acknowledging their limitations I have also shown that these theories are not universally applicable. In order to continue to develop and improve these theories, it is necessary to continue to apply them to different settings. I acknowledge that my case selection may display an anti-Western bias in the sense that the emergence and socialization of democratic norms within these organizations either doesn't exist at all or exists at a very minimal level. My research also speaks to organizations heavily influenced by actors like China, but what about organizations that are influenced by formidable actors that are not as powerful as China? For instance, researching international organizations that are more within the sphere of influence of Western powers and have still managed to promote and localize new norms will provide for further strengthening of theoretical debates.

There are very few international organizations that exist outside the sphere of influence of the United States and other Western powers, let alone international organizations that have the power to

yield a vast influence on Central Asia and Southeast Asia, but the SCO and ASEAN have successfully managed to yield such and influence and have prevented themselves from internalizing Western norms. The SCO represents a formidable challenge to the ideas of universal democracy and human rights through its de facto legitimization of authoritarianism and by establishing itself as a counterweight to external democratic norms.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, two decades ago, it was common for Southeast Asia to be portrayed as essentially a construct of Western academia. Now, ASEAN has demonstrated that Southeast Asia is a formidable force that must also be taken into account in these theoretical debates. Together, these two IOs become more important when they express their readiness to cooperate because we can ask ourselves: will this cooperation be sufficient enough to challenge or impact Western IOs? If we agree with Finnemore and Sikkink that shared ideas, expectations and beliefs about appropriate behavior are what gives the world structure, order and stability, my research on normative theory speaks to one of the ways in which these two IOs could impact Western IOs in inherently posing alternative norms that could lead to normative shifts and have profound consequences for the future of the region.

The state of scholarly research on normative theory has not been as prominent as other theories primarily for one reason. Normative and ideational phenomena are difficult to measure, and so they have tended to be pushed aside for methodological reasons.¹⁰⁵ Although norms are “no easier to measure today than they were in the 1930s or the 1960s,” a better understanding of the applicability of norms in certain contexts is important for the continuation of meaningful theoretical debate.¹⁰⁶ We do in fact know that norms exist because they prompt justifications for actions and leave an extensive trail of communication between actors that can and are being studied. The theoretical contestation in my research is important because it allows for a better understanding of

¹⁰⁴ Ambrosio, Thomas. “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’,” 1322.

¹⁰⁵ Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change.” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 891.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

norms in non-Western settings, which until very recently has been neglected altogether. The question of why is nebulous, but is associated with the idea that norms are extremely ideational. It takes time to observe the influence of certain norms and the pushback against others, and it is now clear that Western ideas embedded in the broader liberal framework have not been socialized into Central Asia and Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁷ Unilateral socialization has been replaced by a complex system of mutual interactions which can be best examined via theoretical lens, since no prevalent explanation for these mutual interactions and behaviors is in place.

My research is not enough to conclude that the theories in existence are remotely sufficient to explain why specific norms sets emerge and diffuse. There are too many norm sets in place to make that assumption. Norms help set the contours for what behavior is appropriate and legitimate within specific regions, and since international organizations can operate according to or in opposition to specific norm sets, they also help determine whether or not there will be meaningful political change in their respective regions. What my research does exemplify is the fact that explanations for norm emergence and diffusion in non-Western settings must continue to be analyzed precisely because of the potential for political change that these international organizations hold.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, David. "Who's Socialising Whom? "

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Appendix

TABLE 1. *Stages of norms*

	<i>Stage 1 Norm emergence</i>	<i>Stage 2 Norm cascade</i>	<i>Stage 3 Internalization</i>
<i>Actors</i>	Norm entrepreneurs with organizational platforms	States, international organizations, networks	Law, professions, bureaucracy
<i>Motives</i>	Altruism, empathy, ideational, commitment	Legitimacy, reputation, esteem	Conformity
<i>Dominant mechanisms</i>	Persuasion	Socialization, institutionalization, demonstration	Habit, institutionalization

Figure 1: Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 898.